

rice, tobacco etc. which are covered under support price operations. To discourage imports so as to reduce the supply of these commodities, import duties have been levied on these commodities. In order to ensure remunerative prices to the farmers, twenty-four major agricultural commodities, including rice, copra and tobacco are covered under the Minimum Support Price (MSP) scheme. The details of action taken are as follows:—

Rice—The import duty has been increased to 80% on rice in the husk and husked brown rice. For semi-milled and wholly milled rice, the import duty has been increased to 70%. As on 31.7.2000 the total procurement by Central Pool agencies was 16.65 million tonnes.

Copra—A basic import duty of 35% has been levied on copra. Copra has also been placed in the Restricted List of imports. As on 7th August, 2000 NAFED had procured 77,329 tonnes of milling copra in copra growing States.

Tobacco—A basic import duty of 35% has been levied on tobacco. STC procured 5.73 million kgs. of tobacco as on 7th August, 2000.

Rubber—A basic import duty of 35% has been imposed on rubber. STC has been asked to procure upto 20,000 tonnes natural rubber on Government account and supply to advance License holders on the basis of indents placed by them. The import of natural rubber has been suspended w.e.f. 20th February, 1999. In order to promote the demand of rubber, *inter alia*, excise duty on articles of rubber has been reduced from 24% to 16% CENVAT.

Contributions in P.M. Relief Fund for Droughts/Famines

2048. SHRI K. RAHMAN KHAN: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) the amount of contributions received in the PM's National Relief Fund following PM's appeal to the public for help to tide over the grim situations due to droughts/famines in some States of the country;

(b) the amount released so far to each affected State; and

(c) what is the mechanism evolved to ensure that the assistance so given are properly utilised?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI S.B.P.B.K. SATYANARAYANA RAO): (a) and (c) Questions pertaining to Prime Minister's National Relief Fund are not admissible under relevant rules of "Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business" in the Rajya Sabha, since the corpus of this Fund is constituted entirely with voluntary public contribution and not from any allocation out of the Consolidated Fund of India and disbursements from the Fund are entirely at the discretion of the Prime Minister.

Central Aid for Drought Hit Victims

2049. SHRI RAJU PARMAR: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) the quantum of Central aid sought, sanctioned and given for relief of drought hit victims and drought relief measures to the State of Gujarat and other State hit by drought this year;

(b) the number of persons, families forced to leave their homes and huts in search of water, food and fodder; and

(c) the number of persons and cattle killed during such transmigration?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI S.B.P.B.K. SATYANARAYANA RAO): (a) Details in respect of Gujarat, Rajasthan and Andhra Pradesh which experienced severe drought are indicated below:

(Rs. in crore)

Calamity State	National Fund for Relief Fund		Calamity Relief Assistance	
	1999-2000	2000-2001	demanded	released
Gujarat	121.05	131.14	722.16	54.58
Rajasthan	155.25	168.18	1144.40	102.93
Andhra Pradesh	107.69	77.78	720.36	75.36

(b) and (c) The three State Governments have not reported any migration of persons or cattle due to drought.